

O.R.C.A. Outreach and Restoration Community Apprenticeship

What are the most essential elements in young people's lives, as they complete school, find work and make positive personal decisions?

Youth development involves identifying these positive elements and seeking ways to make them available to all youth. Youth development represents a move away from focusing only on the negative indicators (rate of teenage pregnancies or high school drop outs, for example) to how youth can achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

Public safety continues to be a top priority in most communities; however, there continues to be a big gap between the need for these services and governmental services that would help build communities and decrease



Intern Raymona shows little sister a map of neighborhood where trees will be planted.

Photo EarthCorps

crime. Parks tend to be concentrated in affluent neighborhoods. Leaving low-income and inner-city communities with inadequate and severely overcrowded parklands in 16 out of 23 cities surveyed (1999 Report produced by the President's Council on Sustainable Development.) Recreation is particularly important for the quality of life for youth and also affects crime.

Washington State University and EarthCorps have combined expertise in the field of youth development, environmental education, and service learning in an effort to give urban youth unique and exciting experiences that will enable them to make positive choices and become active participants in their community through after-school forestry education.

Program Goals:

- To use after-school forestry education and activities as a metaphor for sustainable communities
- To teach leadership and youth development skills to in underserved/urban communities
- To improve civic engagement among youth

IMPACTS

- The South West Youth Environmental Leadership (SWEL) Program (youth outreach program of EarthCorps) brought out nearly 100 volunteers to the tree planting event in the South Seattle, effectively engaging non-English speaking residents and enlisting the help of Latino residents to make tamales for the event.



Outreach Interns pose as their tree planting event comes to a close.

Photo EarthCorps.

- EarthCorps is currently working with New Start, a one stop service center for at-risk youth, to create habitat structures (bird and bath houses, adding habitat for creatures) The full program is composed of a summer youth employment program centered around the theme of sustainable communities and highlight camping trip to the North Cascades.



South West Youth Leadership group poses after a long hike to the mountain top in the North Cascades National Park.

Photo EarthCorps

- EarthCorps will be working with a separate urban youth group in the Burien area to remove invasive plants and improve water stewardship at Lake Wood Park.

Outreach Interns, Andrea Penglas & Dianne Siasco, share their experience:

“Even though a lot of the teens went to the same high school, most of them had never even talked to each other before, so we kicked off the program by doing a bunch of icebreaker and team building activities. Everyone, including us, was nervous but the group turned out to be an open-minded, active and lively bunch.”

Youth Leadership at Work in South Seattle

Low income teens, ages 15-18, from Beacon Hill and the Rainier Valley (Southeast) and Delridge and White Center (Southwest) participated in a leadership and civic engagement program led by EarthCorps Outreach Interns. Educational topics covered included environmental justice, native plant identification, and volunteer management. At the end of the program, the teens created, organized and managed their own restoration volunteer events around forestry.

After weeks of hard work and classes, the teens were ready to plan and organize their own event. One group chose to do a volunteer event at Beacon Hill's Cheasty Greenspace planting native trees, removing ivy, and mulching. The other group led their neighbors in planting street trees and conducted a community clean up. At both events, youth leaders welcomed volunteers, presented an event overview, answered questions, and explained proper tool use and safety.

At the end of the program the teens saw something else take place. Something they didn't plan. People from all over the neighborhood talked together as they planted. New relationships formed. Young people talked to old people. People of diverse ethnicities mingled. Teen leaders saw the value of what plants did for so many people on one day. They learned in class that trees provide shade and clean air, but only from working together and seeing the result of their work did they learn about beauty and neighborhood pride. Their trees are a physical marker and symbolic connection to what was shared.

“I think the work and the staff of EarthCorps are just amazing. It isn't every day that we have the opportunity to work with such a talented and dedicated group of people. Their commitment and motivation rubs off on us. Both of my kids and I participated in the tree planting event and every time we go to the store my son Tony says “ Mom, can we go drive by our tree I want to see how it's doing.” And whenever, we drive by the tree and other people are in our car he says “look there's my tree!” It's so interesting how the act of planting one tree has given him such a big sense of ownership in our community.”

S. Delridge community member, Soledad Strubhar (Latino Community Organizing Project)

The work described above is a partnership between EarthCorps and WSU 4-H Youth Development for more information on these particular program please visit:

EarthCorps at www.earthcorps.org and

WSU 4-H Youth Development at

<http://www.metrokc.gov/wsucce/4-H>

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Outreach Interns & community members proudly display a tree they just planted.

Photo EarthCorps